

**IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FOR BETTER
STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENT IN DEFENCE FUNDED
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement in the education of their children is important. But, what makes some Parents different is their ability to go beyond implicit and conventional norms of parental responsibility for the well being of their children. Parental involvement in a residential school environment is a complex issue as in the case of defence funded residential Schools. In this study, Principals of Defence funded residential Schools along with Parents were interviewed on the basis of a semi-structured questionnaire. This study was designed to identify the limitations of effective Parental Involvement in enhancing the overall performance of the students in Defence oriented and funded Schools in India .Semi structured interviews were conducted with the respondents. In the present paper the study provides a mechanism through which parental involvement can be enhanced without disturbing the school functioning ..

Key words: Parental Involvement, Defence funded Schools, ICT , Leadership ,School Administration.

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A Monthly Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed Open Access International e-Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories
Indexed & Listed at: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory ©, U.S.A., Open J-Gate, India as well as in Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities, U.S.A.

International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences

<http://www.ijmra.us>

INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays an indispensable role in effectiveness of an educational institution, right from the setting of goals to accomplishment of goals. In absence of leadership goal accomplishment and school effectiveness is never guaranteed. In order to achieve change and effectiveness in education, the role of Principal is often crucial. The Principal is challenged to create the culture of quality that penetrates to the smallest elements, processes and the systems of an institution. It is often said that education begins at home. And hence it's all upon Parents to help their child educate and be a better person. Parent's involvement in their child's education is definitely important. It creates a big difference in their child's performance and academic evaluation. Parents are known to be the role models for kids. Kids also look after their Parents as a guide, a source and an important advisor. Parent's involvement can be an accelerating factor for a child's development. The school and the Parents all have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if Parents and Schools work in partnership. There is no universal agreement on what parental involvement is, however there are two broad strands. Parents' involvement in the life of the school. Their involvement in support of the individual child at home and at school. Research evidence clearly states that children's progress can be hindered by lack of parental involvement. In a study designed to test whether the educational performance of children was influenced by Parents the research found that children were disadvantaged not by social class, but rather by lack of Parents' interest. One of the important features of the right to education act (RTE) is that all Schools should have School managing committee. The independent Schools had this system earlier also in which there is representation of the Parents and teachers as well. The government Schools also had such committees but now as per the act, government Schools are likely to have this committee in which seventy five percent of the members will be from Parents or the guardians of the children studying in that school. Not only this, the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson would be from the member Parents. This shows how important the role of the Parents is even outside their home. The Schools which have the parent teacher meetings on regular basis are able to look after the children in a better way than the Schools where PTMs are not very regular or are not taken seriously. Presently whether the government funded and managed residential public Schools, where children come from all parts of the country have such mechanism to accommodate parental involvement is required to be explored.

BACKGROUND

Defence funded Schools are the Schools which are fully or partially funded by Government of India through the defence allocations in the budget. There are three kinds of Schools which fall under this category such as Rashtriya Indian Military College, Sainik Schools(24) and Rashtriya Military Schools(05) all together 30 in number where students come from all parts of the country. These Schools are modelled on Public School lines and admissions are open to the sons of defence personnel and civilians and are member of the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSC). In last couple of decades the defence funded Schools have not been able to deliver the envisaged results and have failed to feed adequate number of cadets to country's armed forces as per the envisaged objectives set by the planners. This has generated a debate in all the circles of decision making bodies of the government and the concerned authorities are trying to address the issues to pin point reasons for the drop in performance of cadets, teachers and the leaders like school Principals. In this complex scenario the role of Parents in improving the students' achievement remains unexplored.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies that have been conducted in the past emphasize on parental involvement at home (Entewisle & Hayduk, 1981; Lockheed, et al., 1989; Israel, et al., 2001; Ho-Sui Chu & Willms, 1996; Baker & Stevenson, 1986) and at school (Grolnick & Slowiacek, 1994; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003; Lareau, 1987; Ramsay, et al., 1992; Reay, 2004; Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Milne, et al., 1986; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 1987) in providing positivity either at home or at school are often associated with the parent's background. Family background variables such as job, education, income, race and family structure feature prominently in studies related to the child's education (Milne, et. al., 1986: 125). In fact, the influences of family background on educational experience of a child become increasingly vital in the field of sociology of education (Lareau, 1987: 73).

The relationship between Parents and school is inevitable whenever there is a discussion on the issue of formal education received by a child. The strength of parental involvement in their child's education increases when the school has positive views towards the Parents; and if they are willing to collaborate with Parents (Bauch & Goldring, 2000; Griffith, 1998). To be more specific, in evaluating the relationship between Parents and school, parental involvement in their

child's education especially at school is truly important for a child's educational success during his or her school years. However, not all the Parents are able give the same support to their children's education at school. In this case, family background has a significant influence on a child's achievement in education.

Lareau's study (1987), for example, found that middle-class Parents view the partnership between Parents and teachers as one of the factors which affects the child's educational success at school. Apart from Lareau (1987), Reay's study (1999) also found that apart from their experience dealing with the professionals, middle-class mothers bring in the habitus which is formed by educational success into the education space. Reay (2004) in another study on mother's involvement found that most middle-class mothers receive feedback from their child's school through dialogue sessions when conflicts arise between home and school and the mothers are also capable of rejecting irrational proposals at school. Meanwhile, Baker and Stevenson's (1986) study found that mothers who have a higher level of education have more knowledge on child's schooling, more contact with the school, are better informed about their child's achievement, monitor their child's progress and show more effort in leading their child to higher level of education (Baker and Stevenson, 1986). Apart from Baker and Stevenson's study, a study done by Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) explains four major aspects of involvement practiced by Parents in ensuring their child's educational success; and two of them are communication with the school and parental involvement at school. Ramsay's et al. (1992) study. An addition to the studies discussed above, Lockheed, et al. (1989) proved that a child whose father is a professional and mother who is highly educated had high scores in Mathematics. Hence, it can be said here that parent's education level has a high impact factor on their involvement in children's education. This parental involvement increases the academic achievement of the child. In another study, Kaplan, et al., (2001) proves that parents who have low level of education and a high negative self-feeling may not have high expectations on children in education achievement. The more the level of parent's education, the higher the education aspirations hold by the Parents towards the academic achievement of their children (Lockheed, et al., 1989).

SUMMARY

The review of literature has revealed that a very small number of studies in Indian context have studied the impact of Parental involvement in residential public Schools in India. More over there have been no specific research carried out on defence funded Schools regarding impact of parental involvement on overall performance of the school including students achievements. Therefore the gaps in research are required to be filled by investigating whether involvement of Parents can be factored in improving the overall performance and students' achievements in defence funded Schools in India.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do defence funded residential Schools have an effective Parent –Teacher interaction mechanism in place?
- Is the school administration encouraging greater role of Parents in school functioning?
- Are the Parents satisfied by the present system?
- What are the suitable measures that can be implemented to foster better interaction between Parents and teachers ?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study lies in its exploratory nature as it attempts to identify the limitations of effective Parental Involvement in enhancing the overall performance of the students in Defence oriented and funded Schools in India and suggest a workable model outlining the framework for effective parental involvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, Principals of Defence funded residential schools along with Parents were interviewed on the basis of a semi-structured questionnaire. Questionnaires were used by the researcher to obtain data related to the school-Parents partnership and the Parents' involvement strategies implemented for their child's education. Separate questionnaire were prepared for Parents and Principals. Data received from both parties was analysed and inferences drawn.

FINDINGS

The Principals of 10 defence funded residential public Schools randomly selected by the author were interviewed based on a semi structured questionnaire.

Serial no	Question	Agree/ Yes	Disagree/ No
1	Do you think such Schools need a formal system of Parent-teacher interaction mechanism	80%	20%
2	Do you have an effective system of interaction in place	70%	30%
3	Is active involvement of Parents a hindrance?	90%	10%
4	Do you intimate the progress of a child to the Parents?	100%	--
5	Is there any scope of improving the interaction mechanism?	100%	--
6	Is it possible to hold monthly Parents teacher meeting?	--	100%

Table 1

The Principals response clearly exhibits that there is a need to have better and more Meaningful interaction between the teachers and Parents as the present system does not allow frequent parent-teacher interaction. However too much involvement in school affairs may be counterproductive. There is a system in place where in the progress of the child is intimated to concerned Parents. Some Schools do have SMS system in place some have interactive web sites also. The fact remains that most of the Principals feel that Parents role is required to be confined as role models and motivators rather than taking over the task of administrators as there is little scope of change in government funded Schools. However there is enough scope for improving meaningful interaction.

Twelve Parents of students studying in different Schools were interviewed based on a semi structured questionnaire. The results are exhibited in table 2.

Ser no	Question	Agree/Yes	Disagree/No
1	Are you happy with the current	40%	60%

	system of Parent –teacher interaction?		
2	Do you agree that too much parental involvement will be counterproductive?	50%	50%
3	Do you feel that regular interaction with teachers without disturbing the school is possible?	80%	20%
4	Do you think telephone/email/web can change the picture?	80%	20%

Table 2

The response of the Parents reveals that a majority of the Parents are not satisfied with the present system of the parental involvement in their child's progress. Only 50% of the Parents realise that too much involvement will not lead to better rapport with the school and the teachers however 50% feel it will have positive effect. Parents want constant and regular interaction with teachers and feel that such interaction will not affect functioning of the school. Progressive Parents want better technology to facilitate fast and effective intimation of progress of their wards. Overall Parents need a better platform/mechanism for interaction with school authorities.

The following barriers to effective Parent-Teacher interaction have been identified in defence funded Residential Public Schools:-

- The schools are located @ one per state except for NE region, Bihar and Haryana. Almost three fourth of the students admitted hail from the same state and one fourth from other states. Thus due to distances involved it becomes difficult for Parents to frequently visit the school.
- The majority of the Parents serve in armed forces /other services below the rank of Officers thus frequent movement from place of duty is difficult.
- Almost 22.5% of the seats are reserved for candidates belonging to SC/ST category.
- A large section of Parents of the students are not highly educated and language always remains a major barrier for them for interaction.

DISCUSSION

It is observed that in large number of studies carried out world wide all the scholars have accepted that parental involvement indeed helps out a child in his/her scholastic achievement to a large extent in the case of children residing with Parents who are able to spend some quality time with their Parents. However in case of the students studying in residential Schools especially defence funded and oriented the parental involvement is not envisaged in a similar way as done in other public/private Schools The present study clearly amplifies that active involvement of parents in school affairs and frequent interactions with faculty is not desirable as it is construed as a hinderance due to multiple factors in a defence oriented residential schools as it is perceived to affect the students psychologically and may lead to mal adjustment . The proactive element of the parents as in the case of private schools does not exist and can hardly contribute towards administrative/scholastic reforms, innovations as the guidelines are pre decided and are not subject to change or further modification. Parents involvement in defence oriented residential Schools will remain confined to emotional and psychological aspects however there is a great scope of improving parent teacher interaction through adaptation of ICT into schools' functioning and organisation of periodic interaction between Parents and teachers at the convenience of the Parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Devise and conduct an orientation programme for Parents duly incorporating all aspects of the CCE as implemented by CBSE.
- Hand outs for Parents may be prepared giving details of the school calendar and all planned activities for enabling Parents for making arrangements for movement if planned or likely to be undertaken by them.
- Bulk SMS system can be installed and used for intimation.
- Interactive internet based web site giving each cadet a unique identity and his progress details can be loaded and seen by Parents. Queries if any can be forwarded through E – mails. Periodic print out in English/Hindi as desired by Parents can also be given.
- Two formal interactions in a calendar year can be organised just after the half yearly and final exams.

- Students may be encouraged to speak to their Parents at least twice a week on telephone.
- Interactive tele-conferencing in specified hours can be organised for updating the Parents on progress of their wards.

CONCLUSION

The attention and the support indicated by the school in discussing the child's education enable the Parents to understand the role and responsibilities of the school. It also enables the Parents to understand every effort of the school in improving the student's educational attainment. Apart from that, the school's notification to Parents with regard to meetings and activities held in the school is another type of cooperation shown by the school. It enables the Parents to identify the school's agendas and discuss the agendas which take place at school with their child. Besides that, it helps the Parents to identify the level of their child's involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities which leads to overall personality development. The school's notification to Parents about meetings and activities also enables the Parents to identify important dates in the school calendar so that they could continue to motivate their children on their preparation for the same. Furthermore, the school's cooperation in holding activities at the right time allows flexibility for the Parents to attend these activities. In school, meetings between Parents and teachers enable the Parents to obtain important information about school activities, the importance of parental involvement and the strategies that can be applied by Parents to be involved in their child's education at home (during vacations) and at school. Thus communication between Parents and school through arranged meetings motivates the parent to enhance parental involvement in their child's education at school.

At the same time, Parents have a greater awareness of the need to be involved in their child's education when the school provides more information about their child's educational development and potential. It also helps the Parents to monitor their child's behaviour in order to ensure that they are on the right track in terms of learning attitude and behaviour.

The current study has its limitations. The study only focuses on the feasibility of parental involvement in achieving better students achievement in residential public Schools funded by government and oriented towards making the students join the Indian Armed Forces. A comparative study between a private residential public school and defence funded residential school might reveal a different perspective. Thus, further research is recommended within this

scope to understand the comparison between the attitude of school administration and acceptable levels of involvement of Parents in private and government funded residential Schools.

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